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FUTURE PROCESS OF POLICY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Statement by
Honourable Ron Basford
Minister of State for Urban Affairs

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[Conferences]

The provinces have made clear enough here, and express this, that you want a better handle on federal housing policy, so that it fits more closely and ably into your differing needs and priorities. That is reasonable. You want a continuing influence on the directions of the billion-dollar budget of CHS and the legislative - policy impact of the National Housing Act. That is reasonable -- within reason. That is precisely what the federal government wants, so as to make federal housing policy as effective and responsive as

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FUTURE PROCESS OF POLICY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

I think what I have to say here is very simple... simple and yet the crux of this conference. It is that, plainly, you and I want the same thing. We want to provide better homes in more comfortable communities for Canadians -- and we do not want to be off pulling in different directions about it. There is too much that we want to do, with the one taxpayer providing the resources, for that kind of inefficiency. I think we all accept that. And we are here to make improvements on how we get on, together, with a job that lies at the root of how well, or how badly, Canadians live in social comfort.

The provinces have made clear enough here, and before this, that you want a better handle on federal housing policy, so that it fits more closely and easily into your differing needs and priorities. That is reasonable. You want a continuing influence on the directions of the billion-dollar budget of CMHC and the legislative - policy impact of the National Housing Act. That is reasonable -- within reason. That is precisely what the federal government wants, so as to make federal housing policy as effective and responsive a

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social instrument as possible for Canadians in their varied provinces and communities. And of course, to do that we cannot be speaking of a one-way traffic.

The federal government needs to be aware of, and able to discuss, provincial housing and community planning policies. There have been as many major new programs launched without prior consultation by provinces as there have been by the federal government. The federal government has to know provincial planning and priorities in order to be able to fit in with them. We already do a very great deal of consulting and cooperating, in formal ways and endlessly between Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and provincial housing institutions. But we can do more. That is what this conference is about. It is to put us on a high road whose traffic flows two ways -- or flows three ways, I should say, paying respect and concern for these places where our homes are built and where we all live, our municipalities. There is not a house built nor a community planned that is not part of a municipality.

It is quite clear to me, as I am sure it is to most of you, that a growing involvement of the municipalities is needed in major community-building decisions -- decisions that hit them, and thus individual Canadians, right where they live. I think, moreover, it is inevitable. The trends are swinging that way. The individual Canadian, starting with the insti-

tutions closest to him, is exerting pressure on the kind of community and home - affecting decision-making that goes on. And we are here to respond.

We have talked here these two days about how our levels of government can better fit policies, programs and planning together. We have discussed the federal proposals for three-year budgeting and roll-over, for removing shared-cost provisions from some programs. You have before you a federal recommendation for a comprehensive nation-wide study of just what the housing and community needs are in all parts of Canada -- a study to which the Federal government is prepared to commit \$1.5 million. I have invited you to join me in a study of land markets, and in developing a plan of action to amass land and bring land costs down. And I have offered the resources of the Federal government beyond my own agencies the programs of other appropriate federal departments and agencies - in support of provincial action to meet housing needs of rural people and of native people.

These are all useful initiatives, but I think we can go well beyond them. We can agree to set up a continuing process of consultation -- of effective consultation that produces joint action -- at the political level and by officials. I mean to go beyond the current working relationships our institutions have now and to set up special machinery for consulting both on the broad lines of policy and on such vital

specifics as the allocation of budgets, the design of housing programs, planning new or revived communities, banking land and so on.

This regular and continuing machinery could be in the form of an annual meeting of Ministers -- along with, I would strongly hope, municipal participation, on housing and community planning. This meeting could be held each fall, when CMHC and provinces are preparing their next fiscal year's budgets. The meetings could be a part of, or attached to, the annual national tri-level conferences on urban affairs which I trust will be a continuing part of the national scene. Certainly there is no more important urban matter than the homes and neighbourhoods we live in. The next national meeting on housing could come in conjunction with the next National Tri-Level Conference on Urban Affairs, which is being prepared for next fall.

We can have officials work together on preparing for this meeting, identifying key issues, coming up with an agenda that promises concrete action in explicit areas. This possible joint committee of officials would also be a valuable instrument of continuing sharing of information and of views.

As well as such national tri-level consultation, the Federal government wishes to be responsive to particular regions. I do not mean any replacement of the province-by-province consultation that already goes on. I am thinking of

regular meetings of officials to discuss implementation of housing programs within regions. The federal government is open to suggestions for regional Ministerial meetings as well. Once again, we look to participation by municipal officials and elected representatives.

I expect other Ministers will have additional ideas for making the activities of government in our field more rational. I offer what I have said above as a basic framework for taking on any and all suggestions and considerations, for a continuing joint examination of how to produce the best homes and neighbourhoods we can.

